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Housekeepers' Chat

May 31, 1929
U. S. Department of Agriculture
Friday, May 31, 1929.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Fine Points on Jelly Making." From Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

Bulletins available: "Home Canning of Fruits and Vegetables," and mimeographed circular on jelly-making.

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One summer day, a long time ago, I helped Grandmother pick blackberries, for jelly. Did you ever pick blackberries? Then you know all about the scratches, and the chiggers. Of course, when the berries are made into a luscious pie, or a delectable jelly, you forget all about the scratches and the chiggers, and only wish you had picked more berries, while you were in the blackberry patch.

After the berries were picked, Grandmother and I made jelly. She tied one of her big calico aprons around me -- the strings were supposed to fasten around the waist, but I had to fasten them around my neck, to keep from tripping on the hem of the apron.

Grandmother never used a cookbook -- at least I never saw one in her kitchen. She made her jellies by a rule-o'-thumb recipe: A measure of sugar to a measure of juice, and boil till it "jells."

As I remember, this rule did not always produce a jelly that Grandmother was proud of. Often the jelly was just right, but sometimes it was tough, and sometimes it failed to "jell." If the jelly was too tough, Grandmother patiently dissolved it in hot water, added more sugar, and boiled again, till she got a better jelly. If it failed to jell, the remedy was more juice, rather than more sugar.

I've learned a great deal about jelly-making, since the days I picked blackberries. For one thing, I've learned that it does not pay to use rule-o'-thumb recipes. Of course Grandmother's rule worked, with a good jelly-making fruit juice.

This morning I'm going to broadcast a few pointers on jelly-making for those who want a supply of clear, sparkling, quivering jelly, to serve with hot biscuits and butter, with waffles and pancakes, with meats and with omelets, with cakes and little cookies, and jelly roll, and as a garnish for desserts.

I'll begin the discussion by asking you a question: What do you consider the two chief points, by which the home jelly-maker can judge her success? Some one says color. Another says sparkling clearness. Yes, color and sparkling

clearness are important. But what about flavor, and texture? Aren't they the two chief points in jelly making? The delicious fresh fruit flavor, by which you can tell raspberry from currant jelly with your eyes shut, and the tender, quivering texture that the very word "jelly" calls to mind.

I shall give you, this morning, a few brief rules for making jelly from raspberries, blackberries, currants, and other summer fruits.

If possible, use a half and half mixture, of under-ripe and ripe, fruit. The under-ripe gives the best texture, and the ripe, the best flavor. Such a combination is ideal. If you must use fruit which is over-ripe, adding one tablespoonful of lemon juice, to each cup of fruit juice, just before it is combined with the sugar, will improve the flavor, texture, and clearness, particularly of blackberry jelly. One tablespoon of lemon juice, to each cup of fruit juice -- that's correct.

Wash the fruit thoroughly, but do not let it soak, and be careful not to break the tender skin. Drain the fruit. Make jelly from 6 to 8 pounds of prepared fruit at a time. This quantity is easy to handle, and can be cooked quickly. Larger quantities of fruit must be cooked so long that the fresh fruit flavor, and brilliant color, may be lost. Crush some of the fruit, to start the flow of juice, and boil it rapidly, stirring all the time, for 3 to 10 minutes, depending on the condition of the fruit. Juice for jelly making can be extracted from all berries, and from grapes, without adding water, and when done by this method has rich flavor. Blackberries are an exception to this rule. Blackberries seem to yield better and more delicately flavored jelly if one-fourth to one-half cup of water is added to each pound of berries.

When the fruit is cooked, pour it into a bag, made of canton flannel, and let the juice drain off. When the juice stops flowing, press the bag lightly, two or three times, but don't squeeze it. Hard pressure will make the jelly cloudy.

If fruit is scarce, boil the drained pulp again, with half its measure of water, from 8 to 10 minutes, and drain off the juice, as before. This second extraction is likely to be fairly rich in pectin, and rather poor in flavor, but combined with the first, it makes a satisfactory jelly.

For each cup of fruit juice, use three-fourths to one cup of sugar. Three-fourths to one cup of sugar, for each cup of fruit juice. Too much sugar may prevent the jelly from "jelling", or make it sirupy, while too little sugar may result in tough jelly, of poor flavor. With most berries, however, unless they are over-ripe, the happy medium is easy to strike.

Here's a question often asked: "What kind of a pan should one use, for making jelly?"

The answer: For boiling down juice and sugar, use a large, flat-bottomed pan, to facilitate rapid evaporation. Stir until the sugar is dissolved. Then boil rapidly, until the mixture "sheets" from the spoon. Remove the jelly from the fire, at once. Pour it into low glasses, which have been washed,



boiled for 20 minutes, and drained without wiping.

Fill the glasses carefully, not more than a quarter of an inch from the top, and do not allow any jelly to drip on the inside edge near the rim. Cover the glasses with a sheet of paper, or a clean cloth, to protect from dust. Let the jelly stand until it is firm. If the jelly does not set firmly the first day, do not be discouraged. Cover it well, and put it in the sun for from three to five days. Jelly that "sets" slowly is sometimes the best in texture.

After the jelly has set, but not until then, cover each glass with paraffin, hot but not smoking. Rotate the glass, while the paraffin hardens, so that the paraffin will form a high rim. Adjust the tin tops of the glasses, label with kind and date, and store in a cool, dry place.

There, I can't think of a single item, in connection with jelly making, that I have neglected to mention. However, if you have any questions on the subject, please write to me.

Monday: "Conservation Points for Picnickers." Program contains menu, and recipe for Pineapple Sherbet.

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